The Seven Ecumenical Councils

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[Presented at the General Pastors' Conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, Faith Lutheran Church, Oregon, Wisconsin, January 8, 1997]

Introduction—the Term "Ecumenical"

Ecumenical. The very word makes me feel uneasy. To conservative evangelical Lutheran Christians "ecumenical" means "merger," Christian denominations giving up doctrinal purity and biblical orthodoxy in favor of larger numbers and more powerful earthly associations. Given the twentieth century trend it is understandable that "ecumenical" has become for us a synonym for "liberal." Only those who are willing to give up the clear foundation of God's Word are able to swim in the murky waters of ecumenicism. For us "ecumenical" is a negative term whose goals and objectives are pursued only by "ecumaniacs."

With our present understanding of the term, we might well ask ourselves what we are doing spending precious conference time on the topic of the "ecumenical councils." The subject, however, is not as suspect as it might initially appear. As often happens with language, the passage of time has changed both the actual and the perceived meaning of this word. Sixteen centuries ago, the term "ecumenical" carried with it a more conservative and orthodox connotation than it does today. In the early centuries of the Christian Church, proponents of the "ecumenical" movement initiated efforts to protect the church from false doctrine and to keep it well anchored in Scripture. The term pointed to a church which was universal, gathering Christians from East and West around God's Word.

However, that does not mean if we were suddenly transported back to the fourth century A.D. we would find the term "ecumenical" universally employed to describe a united Christian Church. No official or even unofficial document of the Council of Nicaea described itself as "ecumenical." The documents which we still possess speak of the Council as "the great synod" or "the holy and great synod" or "the sacred synod." This gathering certainly recognized that it was the largest assembly of Christian bishops which the world had ever seen, but it was not world-wide in its representation. The actual number of Western, Latin-speaking bishops at the Council was so small they could be counted on the fingers of one hand. This alone would make it unlikely that the term "ecumenical" would have been employed in 325 A.D.

The term oi)koumenh[1] was well established and well known in the fourth century. As early as the first century B.C. local actor guilds used the term when they formed a larger professional association with its central office in Rome. In the third century A.D. the actors merged with the guild of athletes to form a single association enjoying special tax privileges from the imperial government. The establishment of this association caused Henry Chadwick to conclude that "the Christians borrowed the title 'oecumenical synod' from established usage, especially familiar because of the world-wide professional association of athletes and Dionysiac artists."[2]

The term "ecumenical" was first applied to the Council of Nicaea in a letter of the Egyptian Synod of 338 and at about the same time in the *Vita Constantini* of Eusebius. Although some would like to define the adjective as meaning "world-wide," that was a later definition. Initially "ecumenical" was just an everyday word referring to an "association" of like-minded individuals who worked for common goals. If the epithet "ecumenical" was

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[1] oi)koumenh in koine Greek refers most often to "the inhabited earth, the world." By inference the term also is used in reference to "the inhabitants" of the world. By the first centuries A.D. oi)koumenh was commonly used to refer to "the Roman world," since most Romans believed that all the world that was worth having was part of the empire.

[2] Henry Chadwick, 134.

used in 325 A.D., it was probably based on common usage associated with the church's plea for exemption from taxes.[3]

In 325 there is no reason to suggest the participants of the first Council at Nicaea thought of themselves as a special category of synod which was quite different from other church assemblies. This usage of "ecumenical council" developed as the Arian controversy continued. As the controversy heated up, supporters of Nicaea began to use the expression "ecumenical council" to increase the status of the Council in contrast to the Arian synods held throughout the East.

Ultimately, the "ecumenical" council came to refer to "a synod the decrees of which have found acceptance by the church in the whole world."[4] The entire Christian world accepted this definition until the split between East and West divided Christendom. Regardless of the number of bishops present, the main determinant in deciding whether a council was "ecumenical" was the universal acknowledgement of the council's decisions.

Modern Roman Catholic writers, of course, have a new definition: "Ecumenical councils are those to which the Bishops and others entitled to vote are convoked from the whole world under the Presidency of the Pope or his legates, and the decrees of which, having received Papal confirmation, bind all Christians."[5] Contrary to this definition, we shall see that each of the seven ecumenical councils was called by a secular ruler. None of the councils was dependent upon the consent or the knowledge of the bishop of Rome.

The Council of Nicea, 325 A.D.

From the beginning of the New Testament church, it was common practice for church leaders to meet together for joint study and prayer, to deal with problems and make decisions concerning the spread of the gospel. Acts 15 records the gathering which took place in Jerusalem to discuss the acceptance of Gentiles into the church. Such assemblies continued in other areas of the East after the destruction of Jerusalem eliminated that city as the headquarters of the early Christian Church. These councils had no fixed geographic boundaries which determined participation and they did not possess a recognized authority which diminished the independence of local congregations.

As Christianity spread, local councils were held with great frequency. By the second half of the second century A.D., these councils or synods were meeting in Asia Minor to deal with the rising problem of Montanism.[6] By the third century the right to vote in these ecclesiastical meetings was limited to bishops. Without the protection of Roman law, however, it was not possible for a general council, representing the entire church, to meet during the first three centuries A.D.

In 323 A.D. Constantine defeated Licinius and the entire empire became subject to his personal rule. As emperor Constantine saw the necessity of organizing the Roman Empire along new lines. Since the battle of the Milvian Bridge,[7] he had committed himself to allowing freedom for and toleration of Christianity. What could be more natural than that he should use the established organization of the church to achieve his secular goals. As emperor Constantine employed the military, the civil government and the church to keep himself securely in

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[3] Ibid., 135.
[4] Percival, xi.
[5] Wilhelm, 424.
[6] The Montanists were ascetic Christians who emphasized the miraculous gifts of the apostolic church. They proclaimed the arrival of the Age of the Holy Spirit and the establishment of the millennial reign in Pepuza in Phrygia, which they called "New Jerusalem." They considered themselves to be the only "spiritually-minded" Christians, while all others were "carnal-minded."
[7] The battle of the Milvian Bridge (312 A.D.) was the first battle Constantine fought in the name of the Christian God. Constantine supposedly received instructions in a dream to paint the Christian monogram, the "*chi rho*," on his troops' shields. In his vision this Christian symbol had appeared in the sky with the legend, "*in hoc signo, vinces*" ("in this sign, conquer"). Throughout his life, Constantine ascribed his success to his conversion to Christianity and the support of the Christian God. This victory gave Constantine control of the western portion of the Roman Empire and brought him into an alliance with Licinius, who controlled the East.

power.[8] It was in his own best interest to keep the church united and responsive to centralized authority. It was important therefore to replace local councils, which might become centers of discontent, with larger assemblies which could help to bind the whole empire together.

To gather all the Christian bishops together in the fourth century was impractical. There were probably 2000 bishops at that time.[9] Therefore even the largest councils represented only a small portion of the church's leadership.

The councils were not planned to gather on a regular basis. They were all "occasional" in the sense that they arose out of some immediate situation which demanded attention. In settling the immediate difficulty, these councils established the standard for the entire church. The councils, however, did more than just help the church. The councils always proved advantageous for the emperor.

Unlike the sixteenth century English monarch Henry VIII, Constantine had no desire to be a theologian. He simply wanted to see questions of heresy and orthodoxy determined by a majority. In this way he believed that he could keep peace within the church and retain its support. His decision to call a general council for Nicaea initiated the idea of "a supreme legislative authority for the whole church."[10]

Nicaea was the second largest city of Bithynia. It was easily accessible by land and sea routes from all parts of the empire. In addition, it was only twenty miles from Constantine's imperial residence in Nicomedia. This would allow him to keep an eye on both the council and affairs of state without great difficulty.

Three major questions faced Constantine at Nicaea. First of all, the church needed a uniform method for determining the date of the Easter festival. Different ways of the setting the Easter festival were used in the East and the West, as well as on the local level. A common Easter celebration would contribute to a more uniform empire and develop a sense of unity within its far flung borders.

Secondly, a schism in Alexandria, which grew out of persecution, had to be addressed. Meletius, the bishop of Alexandria, was inclined to deal harshly with those who had not been capable of withstanding the full pressure of persecution. The church discipline employed in his area frequently disappointed this bishop. As a result Meletius separated himself from the main body in order to establish a purer church which consisted only of those who had proven themselves reliable and capable of remaining faithful even in the face of physical torture. Since Egypt was a major source of the empire's grain supply, Constantine could not tolerate any disruptions in Alexandria. The council would allow the emperor to settle this local problem and protect his bread basket.

The last major question before the council was theological in nature. Arius, a priest in Baucalis, a suburb of Alexandria, had tried to explain the Trinity philosophically and his explanations proved unacceptable to many church leaders from other parts of the empire. As a result Arius and his followers had been excommunicated by a council of Egyptian and Libyan bishops who met in Alexandria in 321. In spite of this setback, Arius continued to hold assemblies and to promote his position in Palestine and Nicomedia. Bishops, some supporting Arius and others denouncing him, battled with each other. As time passed, the controversy intensified and threatened to involve all of Eastern Christendom. Constantine wanted a quick restoration of peace within the church.

Early in 325 Constantine issued a letter of invitation to the bishops of the church. He placed at their disposal all available public transportation and paid for it out of the public treasury. In some cases this meant the bishops traveled by public postal carriages. At other times it meant they used government horses, mules or donkeys. For some it still meant they walked. The emperor also promised to pick up housing expenses while in Nicaea and the expenses connected with the return trip home.

Bishops began assembling on May 20, 325 and Constantine formally opened the council on June 19. The number of bishops attending is reported to have been a maximum of 318.[11] Since each bishop could bring along

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[8] The term "Caesaropapism" is used to describe Constantine's concept of cooperative support for the emperor from the civil government, the church and the military.

[9] Wand, 3.

[10] Slaatte, 10.

[11] Some consider this number, as reported by Athanasius, Socrates and Theodoret, to have been chosen for its mystical connotation. The number 318 in Greek letters would be ΤΙΗ, which was considered to be a reference to the cross (Τ) and to the name of Jesus

two presbyters and three servants, the total number attending the council may have reached between 1,500 and 2,000 individuals.

Given the difficulties of travel, it is not surprising that the Eastern provinces were well represented, while the West had only a few delegates present. According to the records of the Council, the Latin church had only seven men in attendance, five bishops and two presbyters.[12] Two representatives from outside the empire were also there: a Persian bishop named John and a Gothic bishop, Theophilus, who was the teacher of the Bible translator Ulfilas.

The clergy in attendance could be divided into three theological groups. The orthodox faction, which confessed the deity of Christ, was initially in the numerical minority, but in talent and influence they were in control. Leading this delegation were bishops Alexander of Alexandria, Eustathius of Antioch, Macarius of Jerusalem, Marcellus of Ancyra and Hosius of Cordova. Above even these illustrious figures was an archdeacon from Alexandria Athanasius. Although small in stature, young in age and not a voting member of the council, Athanasius already demonstrated the potential to lead the orthodox party.

The Arians were the second group represented at the Council. They maintained that the Son of God is a creation of the Father, who is not equal to God, and that the Son is changeable and essentially different from the Father. This group numbered about 20 bishops under the leadership of bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia,[13] who was allied with the royal family. Other Arian bishops included Theognis of Nicaea, Maris of Chalcedon and Menophantus of Ephesus. Also representing this faction was its namesake, the presbyter Arius who attended at the command of the emperor and often was allowed to promote his own views.

Arius came to his view of Christ as he struggled to explain the Trinity to his philosophically-minded members. To them the Arian explanation was reasonable. Furthermore, Arius carried weight with the average people. He was tall, ascetic looking and had demonstrated that he was willing to stand up for the Christian faith against all opposition.

Even more important to the emperor, Arius occupied a commanding position in a suburb where grain was stored before it was dispatched to the capital of the Roman Empire. Constantine believed that it was in his own political interest to keep the Egyptian Christians happy by giving their favorite priest a fair hearing. Prior to the Council, Constantine had written to Arius and stated his opinion that this dispute was fostered by the excessive leisure of the clergy and by an academic love for fighting over trivial matters. He assured Arius that he believed this matter could be resolved without difficulty.

As his comments demonstrated, Constantine was not capable of handling the subtleties of Christian doctrine. Consequently, he was always dependent on his ecclesiastical advisors. At the time of the first Nicene Council, Hosius, the bishop of Cordova, had his ear. This man was a champion of orthodoxy. Hosius lived to be 100 years old and for half his life he was the most influential bishop in Christendom, even though he lived in the far western reaches of the empire.

The third group at the council was the majority party. Under the leadership of bishop Eusebius of Caesarea,[14] the famous ecclesiastical historian, this faction at first took the middle ground between the

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(Ihsouj). Ambrose draws a connection between the number of bishops and the 318 servants of Abraham in Genesis 14:14. Eusebius contends that only 250 bishops attended, or perhaps a few more. He adds there were an indefinite number of priests and deacons there. Later Arabic accounts reported that more than 2000 bishops attended, but they probably confused bishops and general clergy. It is also possible that the council opened with about 250 bishops as reported by Eusebius and that the number grew during the council until it reached the 318 of Athanasius.

[12] Bishops in attendance included: Hosius from Cordova, Spain; Nicasius from Dijon, France; Caecilian from Carthage, North Africa; Eustorgius from Milan, Italy; and Domnus from Strido, Pannonia. The two presbyters were the delegates sent by the agend bishop of Rome, Sylvester I. Their names are recorded as Victor (or Vitus) and Vincentius.

[13] Some consider Eusebius to be the head of yet another faction who were called Eusebians and later were called Semi-Arians or Homoiousians. Eusebius leaned in the direction of the Arians but was less specific. Eusebius believed the Son was “of like substance” with the Father.

[14] Eusebius of Caesarea was the greatest scholar of his day, but he found it difficult to take a stand on a subject and stick with it. Too smart for his own good, we might say, he saw too many sides to each question he considered.

Athanasians and the Arians. Always closer to the right than the left, the majority finally went over to the side of the Athanasians. In many cases this was due to their orthodox instincts or to their preference for simple biblical expressions. Others in this group were uncertain of what they believed and were swayed by the arguments of the larger body or by personal considerations.

The Arians took the lead and proposed a creed which was rejected overwhelmingly. Then Eusebius of Caesarea presented an ancient Palestinian Confession, which was very similar to the Nicene Creed. It acknowledged the divine nature of Christ in general biblical terms, but it did not use the term in question, omoousioj, "of the same essence." This expression was not a new term in the church. Earlier it had even been used by the Sabellians, who denied any personality distinction in the Godhead. The council revived and purified the term, when it insisted that "the identity of essence involved no denial of differentiation of persons."[15] This word permitted them to describe the incarnation concisely, since the Father and Son were of the same essence but were different persons.

Constantine saw Eusebius' creed in advance and approved of it. Even the Arian minority was ready to accept it. The possibility of Arian acceptance, however, made the orthodox contingent uncomfortable. They wanted a confession to which no Arian could subscribe. As a result, they insisted that the expression omoousioj,[16] which the Arians hated, be inserted. Ever the politician of peace, Constantine finally gave his approval to the disputed word, when he saw that Eusebius' compromise confession would not pass without it.

Very quickly thereafter, the secretary of the council read a creed which is very similar to our Nicene Creed.[17] This confession, however, seems somewhat abrupt. The council only wanted to deal with immediate concerns. Therefore, having established the doctrine of the deity of Christ, the creed simply adds the phrase, "And [we believe] in the Holy Ghost." The Nicene statement then concludes with a condemnation of the Arian heresy, which was later dropped in 381.

All the bishops in attendance at Nicaea subscribed to this creed, with the exception of Arius, Eusebius of Nicomedia and four others. Three of them changed their minds, including Eusebius. The other three, including Arius, were exiled in the wilds of Illyria.[18] All the books of Arius were to be burned and his followers were branded as heretics and enemies of Christianity.

For the first time in the history of Christianity, there was a civil punishment for heresy. Before Constantine united church and state, excommunication was the most severe penalty which the church could inflict. Now banishment was added because all offenses against the church were regarded as crimes against the state and society. Later the death penalty was also added to the list of possible punishments for heresy.

The Council of Nicaea also attempted to decide the issue of when to celebrate Easter[19] and the matter of the Meletian schism. Christians in different parts of the empire computed the vernal equinox differently. In Rome it was March 18 and in Alexandria it was March 21. The council decided that Easter must be celebrated on a Sunday, and never on the day of the Jewish Passover. The date chosen for Easter was now to be on the Sunday after the first vernal full moon which took place after the fourteenth day of Nisan. As to the determination of the vernal equinox, the council came to no definitive conclusion. It merely stated that the bishops of Rome and Alexandria should keep in touch and decide the date between them. This decision, of course, made it certain that the date of Easter would continue to be disputed.

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[15] Du Bose, xxvi.

[16] It should be noted that Athanasius himself laid stress on the term and rarely used it in his own writing. He was more concerned about the biblical principle than the name given to it.

[17] See the Appendix for a comparison of the Nicene Creed of 325 with the Constantinopolitan Creed of 381, which is more familiar to us. The deletions and additions are easily noted.

[18] Theonas and Secundus, two Egyptian bishops, were the other men exiled to Illyria with Arius.

[19] The Council of Arles in 314 had already dealt with the Easter question, It had determined that the "Christian Passover" should be celebrated "*uno die et uno tempore per omnem orbem*." The bishop of Rome was to fix the time. This order, however, had not been universally recognized or obeyed.

The Meletian schism arose in Egypt[20] during the persecution under Diocletian about 305 A.D. It began under Meletius, bishop of Lycopolis, who rebelled against his metropolitan, Peter of Alexandria. Meletius, either in his zeal for discipline or in his arrogance, began to operate in Peter's territory and conducted ordinations and excommunications in his neighbor's diocese. Peter later deposed Meletius, but the controversy continued and spread throughout Egypt. The Council of Nicaea attempted to heal the division by compromise. It recognized 29 Meletian bishops as legitimate, but the schism continued. Ultimately the Egyptian Meletians joined the camp of the Arians and continued their opposition to orthodoxy.

Other matters handled by the canons of Nicaea[21] included the following prohibitions: clergy self-castration, neophyte presbyters, women living in a presbyter's house, restoration of excommunicated clergy by another bishop, ordination without an examination, the return of clergy to military service and usury that was practiced by clergy.

On July 29, 325, Constantine hosted a fabulous banquet in his palace. Following these festivities, he dismissed the bishops, giving them sums of money and letters of commendation. This brought the Council of Nicaea to an end. Next to the apostolic council at Jerusalem, Nicaea was the most important gathering in the early Christian Church. It certainly was the most important event in the fourth century. It summed up the previous discussions concerning the deity of Christ and the incarnation. Nicaea was a bloodless intellectual victory for the forces of orthodoxy.

Unfortunately the victory at Nicaea was more an appearance than a fact. Some of the bishops had subscribed to the ὁμοούσιος with reluctance or with reservations. Others signed their names only out of respect for the emperor. As political and ecclesiastical circumstances shifted, the Arian controversy once again broke loose and for a time opposition councils sprang up. Contradictory creeds were published and the two sides hurled anathemas at each other. The continuing doctrinal controversy generated violence and forced the government to get involved. When imperial politics intervened, matters quickly got worse.

In the East, Arianism was the dominant force. The Western church tended to align itself with Athanasius on the side of Nicene orthodoxy. The first attempt to heal this division took place in 343 A.D. when the sons of Constantine, Constantius (337-361) in the East and Constans (337-350) in the West, called a council for Sardica in Illyria. Although the Nicene doctrine prevailed, it was a hollow victory. The Eastern bishops left the council and established a counter-council at neighboring Philippopolis and confirmed earlier decrees supporting Arianism. The dueling councils only succeeded in throwing more fuel on the doctrinal fires.

After the death of Constans in 350, the tide turned against the Athanasians. By deposing and banishing orthodox bishops, Arianism gained the upper hand throughout the Roman Empire. This was no longer the strict Arianism of the past, which spoke of ἑτερούσιος, a "different" essence. It was characterized by a milder form which promoted ὁμοιούσιος, the "similarity" of essence. This position, however, still stood in opposition to the Nicene ὁμοούσιος, the "sameness" of essence. For a time it seemed that Nicene orthodoxy had lost. But when the Arian majority had overcome its common enemy, they began to feud among themselves and they split into two factions.

Constantius attempted to quiet the dispute with additional councils, but he was unable to satisfy either side. His death in 361 opened the door for the second and permanent victory of Christian orthodoxy as it was originally proclaimed at Nicaea in 325.

The Council of Constantinople, 381

When he became emperor, Julian the Apostate (361-363) tolerated all factions of Christendom, hoping that the Christians would destroy each other. In order to carry out his plan this infamous unbeliever recalled the

[20] There was another Meletian schism, but it began in Antioch in 361 and was an offshoot of the Arian controversies.

[21] The council established "canons and creeds." A "canon" refers to matters of ecclesiastical discipline. On the other hand, a "creed" is a brief, authoritative formula of religious belief. It is a composite statement of various doctrines.

orthodox bishops from exile. Fortunately, the advent of a common enemy helped the church to rethink its position. Orthodoxy first regained the Latin church and ultimately it made advances into the East as well. Following an Arian resurgence under the fanatical emperor Valens (364-378), the Nicene faction began its permanent recovery when Gratian (375-383), an orthodox emperor, once again recalled the banished orthodox bishops.

Under the emperorship of Theodosius I (379-395), who had been educated in Spain in the Nicene faith, orthodoxy triumphed in the Roman Empire. In 380 Theodosius issued his famous edict in which he required all his subjects to confess the orthodox faith and threatened heretics with punishment. It was Theodosius who summoned the second ecumenical council to Constantinople in May, 381. His purpose was simple: convert his previous actions into law and unify the church in his empire.

After the exit of 36 Semi-Arian Macedonians, also called "Pneumatomachians,"[22] the first Council of Constantinople was made up of only 150 bishops. This council is considered "ecumenical" but it certainly was not "universal." The Western church had no representatives in attendance.

No original confession came out of this assembly, rather the Nicene Creed was adopted in a revised form.[23] Although there were a number of additions and deletions as compared to the original document, the most important change is found in the additions concerning the deity of the Holy Spirit. This action was taken in response to Macedonianism. It is this 381 edition of the Nicene Creed which is still used in all the churches of Christendom, although the Greek churches have never accepted the later Latin addition of "*filioque*"[24] to the third article of the creed.

Among the seven[25] canons published by the council were condemnations against a number of heresies: the Anomeans,[26] the Arians, the Pneumatomachians, the Sabellians,[27] Marcellians,[28] and the Apollinarians.[29] The Third Canon ranked the bishop of Constantinople, the second Rome, second in honor and dignity behind the bishop of Rome and ahead of the bishop of Alexandria.

The council closed on July 9, 381 and on July 30 Theodosius ratified the decrees of the Council of Constantinople. He demanded that all churches be turned over to bishops who believed in the equal divinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Theodosius refused to give heretics the right to worship in public. As a result, Arianism and the multitude of related errorists were greatly diminished within the Roman Empire. Isolated cases continued to pop up, however, and among the barbarians, who were outside the jurisdiction of the empire, Arianism was perpetuated

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[22] The "Macedonians" denied the full divinity of the Holy Spirit. Their name seems to have been mistakenly taken from Macedonius of Constantinople, who was deposed in 360. They are also called "Pneumatomachians" or "fighters against the Holy Spirit."

[23] Compare the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381 with the original Nicene Creed of 325 in the Appendix.

[24] The third national Synod of Toledo in Spain in 589 inserted the clause "*filioque*" in the Latin version of the Nicene Creed. It was done after the conversion of King Recared to the Catholic faith. It represented the church's enthusiasm for the deity of Christ against the Arian heresy which had lingered in Spain. It was not intended to be disrespectful to the Eastern church. From Spain the clause passed into the Frankish church in Gaul and after 809 it was accepted in Rome. The Eastern churches paid little attention to the addition until 150 years later, when a break between East and West was already underway.

[25] Some count only four canons by listing all the heresies together in one canon.

[26] The Anomeans were Arian theologians who taught the Son is anomoioj, "unlike," the Father. Aetius and Eunomius were their leaders. Sometimes they were called "Eunomians."

[27] Sabellius was the leading proponent of Monarchianism. Theologians who attempted to safeguard monotheism by viewing the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as different modes or operations of one Godhead were called "monarchians," sometimes "modal monarchians." Monarchians are sometimes referred to as "Patripassians" because they contended the Father suffered with the Son.

[28] Marcellus, bishop of Ancyra in Galatia, started out as one of the leaders of the Nicene party. In his attacks against the Arians and Semi-Arians, however, he went too far. In his effort to save the full divinity of Christ and his equality with the Father, Marcellus denied the existence of the Son of God before the incarnation. Furthermore, he insisted the sonship was only a temporary state, which begins with the coming of Christ in the flesh and ends with his promotion into the Godhead. He also had problems with the Trinity, denying the three persons of the Godhead.

[29] Led by Apollinaris of Laodicea, a staunch defender of Nicaea, this faction maintained that the Divine Logos functioned as the mind of Christ who possessed a sentient human body.

for another two centuries. The barbarians held this position because they were converted to Christianity by Arian missionaries. Most did not understand their religion well enough to be able to differentiate between the Arian and the orthodox teachings.

The Council of Ephesus, 431

No sooner had one controversy settled down than another arose to take its place. The instigator in this case was Nestorius. Originally a monk and presbyter in Antioch, he became the patriarch of Constantinople in 428. In that position he immediately persecuted Arians and other heretical factions. Unfortunately, he soon fell out of favor when he opposed the use of the expression "mother of God" (qeotokoj) which had been applied to the Virgin Mary by theologians for some time already and was now passing into the devotional language of the common people. At this time the expression was only intended to denote the union of the human and the divine natures in Christ. Having been trained in Antioch, however, Nestorius could not conceive of a human nature without a human personality, and this Antiochan theology strictly separated from the divine Logos. As a result, Nestorius proposed the expression "mother of Christ" (Xristotokoj) as the most appropriate one to describe Mary.

In the course of the debates, Nestorius publicly proclaimed:

> I separate the natures, but I unite the worship. Consider what this must mean. He who was formed in the womb of Mary, was not himself God, but God assumed him [*assumsit*, i.e., clothed himself with humanity], and on account of Him who assumed, he who was assumed is also God.[30]

As a result of this position, the Nestorian controversy centered around the expression "assumed." The word qeotokoj was the watchword of the orthodox party in the Nestorian controversy, just as the term omoousioj had been in the Arian. Those who opposed this word were viewed as denying the mystery of the incarnation or of the true union of the divine and human natures in Christ.

Nestorius' chief opponent in Constantinople was a local bishop, Proclus of Cyzicum. Unfortunately Proclus carried the worship of Mary to such excess that he would make modern-day Mary-worshipers jump for joy. Soon the attack on Nestorius came under the control of the patriarch Cyril of Alexandria. Cyril first wrote to Nestorious, then to the emperor and royal family, and finally to the bishops in the East and West, attacking the heresy of Nestorius. When Nestorius persisted in his views, Cyril rejected the mediation of patriarch John of Antioch and published twelve anathemas, which were aimed at Nestorius from a council in Alexandria (430). As we might expect, Nestorius replied with twelve counter-anathemas.

As the Nestorian controversy grew, it became apparent that the problem could only be settled by another general council. After Nestorius was condemned by a local council at Rome in August, 430, he asked emperor Theodosius II to call an ecumenical council.

Emperor Theodosius II (408-450), in cooperation with this Western counterpart, Valentinian III (423-455), sent out a letter of invitation on November 19, 430. It summoned the bishops to a council, scheduled to open on the feast of Pentecost, June 7, 431 in the city of Ephesus. Although there is no question it was an ecumenical council, its character is greatly diminished by comparison to Nicaea or the first council of Constantinople. The Council of 431 is important for its support of orthodoxy, but this third ecumenical council stands morally far below its two predecessors.

Ephesus issued no new creed. It simply reaffirmed the previous creeds and condemned the teachings of Nestorius, while endorsing the twelve anathemas of Cyril of Alexandria against Nestorius. The ambitious, violent and overbearing Cyril controlled the meeting and misrepresented his rival, the patriarch of Constantinople. So

[30] Quoted in Schaff, *History*, III, 718.

opposed was Cyril to Nestorianism that he slid into the opposite heresy which would later be known as Eutychianism.

The result of Ephesus was negative rather than positive. The council condemned the Nestorian error without affirming the true doctrine. In a sense, this council was a compromise and compromises do not last. It was only a matter of time before the subject of Christ's natures would have to be revisited.

Cyril died in 444 and was replaced as patriarch of Alexandria by Dioscurus. A man of little intellect and great ambition, Dioscurus wanted to raise the Alexandrian see to supremacy in the East. His theological representative was Eutyches, who gives his name to impending controversy. Although Eutyches was not the author of the monophysite position, he brought it to a head and made it popular.

Eutyches, like Cyril before him, laid his chief stress on the divine nature in Christ. He denied that two natures could be spoken of after the incarnation. After Christ's birth, he worshiped only one nature, the divine. He insisted that the impersonal human nature was assimilated and deified. All human attributes were, according to Eutyches, transferred to the humanized Logos.

At a local synod in 448, Eutyches was charged with heresy. When he refused to recant, he was placed under the ban of the church and publicly humiliated by the local citizenry. But Eutyches had powerful friends among the clergy and in the government. Emperor Theodosius II was persuaded to call a general council for Ephesus in 449.

This council opened in August with 135 bishops present. In spite of its seemingly normal beginnings, this council has been branded with the name of the "Council of Robbers" or the "Robber Synod." The opponents of Eutyches were never allowed to speak, since Dioscurus of Alexandria, Eutyches' patron, was in charge. When it became necessary, Dioscurus used brute force to control the proceedings. Given these circumstances, it comes as no surprise that the council proclaimed Eutyches to be "orthodox."

The Council of Chalcedon, 451

Although Dioscurus had gained a temporary victory, the opposition now united and looked to the Western church for help. Leo I, bishop of Rome (440-461), protested the actions of the "Robber Synod" and urged the calling of a new council in free and orthodox Italy. Quickly, however, he advised postponement of the council, citing the chaos caused by the invasion of Attila the Hun. At approximately the same time, however, a political change made it possible to host the proposed council in the East. Theodosius II died in July, 450 and was replaced by the distinguished general and senator Marcian, who favored Leo and his position on the natures of Christ.

To restore peace, Marcian on May 17, 451 published an edict which called for a general council which was to meet in Nicaea, beginning on September 1, 451. The bishops, including representatives from Rome, assembled as directed, but soon their religious disagreements once again broke out into violent confrontations. To stem these outbursts, the emperor tranferred the council to Chalcedon, where it would be closer to Constantinople and the emperor. It was here that the fourth ecumenical council was called into session from October 8 until November 1.

As far as attendance was concerned, this meeting was far larger than the other councils of this period. The exact number of bishops involved cannot be verified, but the unofficial registers report between 520 and 630. Once again the delegates were from the East; only the papal legates and two Africans represented the West.

Even in Chalcedon the proceedings were often chaotic as the fanaticism of both sides came to the surface. Yet by the end of the first session, the "Robber Synod" had been annulled and the Eutychians had been deposed. At the second session, on October 10, the Creed of 381 was read before the council, which responded with loud applause. At the fifth and most important session, on October 22, a positive confession of faith was adopted which supported the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan creed. This confession stated:

> Following the holy fathers, we unanimously teach one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, complete as to his Godhead, and complete as to his manhood;…as to his Godhead begotten of the Father before all worlds, but as to his manhood, in these last days born, for us men and for our salvation, of the Virgin Mary, the mother of God; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, known in two natures, without confusion, without conversion, without severance, and without division; the distinction of the natures being in no wise abolished by their union,…[31]

This statement was ratified on October 25 in the presence of the emperor, who publicly thanked Christ for restoring unity to the church. The emperor also threatened severe punishment to anyone who stirred up new controversies.

The remainder of the council dealt with personal matters of discipline and restoration, as well as the adoption of 28 canons. The first 27 canons were disciplinary in nature. Canon 28 is entitled "on the honor to be accorded the see of Constantinople." This conciliar resolution aroused the protest of Bishop Leo when it declared the patriarch of Constantinople to be equal to the patriarch of Rome. Although emperor Marcian gave the force of law to the decrees of the council and commanded that all Eutychians be banished from the empire, similar controversies continued to plague the church. In both Palestine and Egypt, the Council of Chalcedon met with open opposition.

Although these new opponents rejected Eutyches' theory of the absorption of the human nature into the divine, they still promoted the doctrine of one nature in Christ and as a result were called "monophysites." Their main argument against Chalcedon was that the doctrine of two natures led to two persons or a severing of Christ into two Sons of God. Like the Nestorians, they could not conceive of human nature without personality. Rather than end controversy, the Council of Chalcedon opened a new era of controversy which lasted for more than a century. These theological disputes were accompanied by the shedding of blood in society and by schism in the church.

The Second Council of Constantinople, 553

Emperor Justinian I (527-565) was a great admirer of the decrees of Chalcedon, and he incorporated the decrees of the first four ecumenical councils in his Code of Roman Law. Unfortunately, his wife Theodora was secretly devoted to Monophysitism and frequently frustrated his efforts to promote orthodoxy. Through her influence a Monophysite bishop was made patriarch of Constantinople and Vigilius was made bishop of Rome with the secret understanding that he should favor Monophysite doctrine. Vigilius, however, did not keep his promise.

At this time a controversy arose over the so-called "Three Chapters" (tria kefaleia). "Chapters" were brief propositions in which certain errors are summarized and anathematized. In this particular case the "three chapters," which were condemned, were 1) the person and writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia (the teacher of Nestorius); 2) the anti-Cyrillian writings of Theodoret of Cyros; and 3) the letter of Ibas to the Persian bishop Maris.

In general the East supported these condemnations, while the West resisted them. To put an end to this controversy, Justinian, without the approval of the bishops, called a general council for Constantinople in 553. Meeting in the great hall attached to the "Hagia Sophia," this fifth ecumenical gathering met in eight sessions from May 5 to June 2.

The bishop of Rome, Vigilius, refused to attend since Justinian summoned an equal number of bishops from the five patriarchal sees, so that there would be more Eastern than Western bishops present. Eustychius, the patriarch of Constantinople presided over the 164 bishops at the council, only eight of whom were from Africa; all the rest from the East.

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[31] Quoted in Schaff, *History*, III, 744-746.

The Second Council of Constantinople issued no new creeds. It simply reaffirmed the previous creeds. Unlike its predecessors, Constantinople II did not issue disciplinary canons nor did it debate ecclesiastical discipline. It did, however, endorse the dogmatic edicts of Emperor Justinian and the condemnation of the "Three Chapters."

This council represented a partial victory for Monophysite doctrine. The Monophysites, however, remained separated from the orthodox church, since they refused to acknowledge the Council of Chalcedon. Although Justinian made one additional effort to regain the Monophysites, his death ended such attempts. His successor, Justinian II (565-574), in 565 issued an edict of toleration, which encouraged all Christians to glorify God, without fighting about persons and syllables. Since that time the history of the Monophysite churches has been distinct from that of the "catholic" church.[32]

The end of the Monophysite controversies did not mean the end of Christological contests, however. The Monophysite struggle was replaced by Monothelitism. Although two wills cannot exist in an ordinary person, Chalcedonian Christology required two wills as the necessary complement of Christ's two natures. Orthodox doctrine saved the completeness of Christ's humanity by asserting his human will. The supporters of Monothelitism were concerned about guarding the unity of Christ's person. They reasoned that if Christ is but one person, he can have only one will.

The problem came to the forefront because of a political motive. In the seventh century, the safety of the Byzantine empire was threatened by the Persians and then by the Arabs. Emperor Heraclius (610-640) decided that he should appease the Monophysites because they were more numerous than orthodox Christians in Armenia, Syria and Egypt. By some sort of union he hoped to protect all Christians in the East. To advance this political cooperation, theological distinctions were downplayed. By 638 the emperor had come out in support of "one will" in Christ. In 648 Emperor Constans II (642-668) tried to restore peace by means of an edict which commanded silence on the subject under dispute without indicating a preference for either view.

Imperial decrees could not silence the conflict and the Roman bishop Martin I, soon after his election in July, 649, assembled the first Lateran Council. The 105 bishops in attendance anathematized Monotheletism and the imperial decrees which sanctioned that position. The emperor responded by deposing Martin who later died in exile.

The Third Council of Constantinople, 680-681

When Constans II was murdered in 668, his son, Constantine IV (668-685), changed his father's policy. It was his desire to restore peace and harmony between the East and the West. To put an end to this controversy, the emperor in 678 asked Roman bishop Donus to send twelve bishops and four Western Greek monastic superiors to represent the Roman patriarchate at an assembly of Eastern and Western theologians. Bishop Agatho, who succeeded Donus, convened a Western synod of consultation around Easter in 680. This synod condemned Monothelitism and its legates took this decision to Constantinople, arriving in September, 680.

Emperor Constantine IV on September 10 issued an edict which called for a general council to meet at Constantinople on November 7, 680. Meeting in the imperial palace in Constantinople, this council convened eighteen sessions, closing on September 16, 681. In its final session the council adopted the decision of Agatho[33]

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[32] The Monophysites have maintained themselves as separate sects in the East under their own bishops and patriarchs to the present. They are scattered throughout Syria, Armenia, Iraq, Egypt and Ethiopia. The four branches of Monophysitism include: the Syrian Jacobites; the Copts, including those in Ethiopia, as well as Egypt; the Armenians and the Maronites.

[33] The epistle of Agatho is clear and precise in stating the orthodox view of the two wills of Christ. It is also remarkable for the way in which it claims infallibility for the Roman pontiff. This was done in spite of the obvious monotheletistic heresy of Honorius, who had been bishop of Rome from 625 to 638. Agatho quotes the words of Christ to Peter in Luke 22:31, 32 as favoring infalliblity. This anticipated by more than a millennium the Vatican decision of 1870, concerning papal infallibility. While the council fully endorsed the dyotheletic view of Agatho, it had no taste for endorsing the claim of infallibility. In fact, it specifically condemned Honorius as a monotheletic heretic.

which condemned Monothelitism. Patriarch Macarius of Antioch was one of the few who refused to go along with this decision and he was deposed. The Acts of the council were signed by 174 bishops. Constantine IV then included all of the council's decisions in an imperial edict which was sent to all parts of the empire.

Constantinople III did not debate church discipline. It issued no disciplinary canons. However, in spite of the prohibition to the contrary, it enlarged the Creed of Chalcedon by adding a ὅρος, or dogmatic definition, which stated Jesus Christ had two distinct and inseparable wills (θελήματα), as well as two natures. It stated that Jesus has a human will and a divine will, working in harmony. The human will is subordinate to the divine; the will being regarded as an attribute of nature rather than person. It also rejected the fifth ecumenical council's leanings toward Monophysitism. The Third Council of Constantinople endorsed the dyophysitism of Chalcedon and supplemented it by teaching the dyotheletism of Christ.

The Second Council of Nicaea, 787

Over the centuries the worship of images had spread, along with the worship of saints, until it became a general custom among the people of the Eastern church. Churches, books, houses, dresses and furniture were decorated with religious pictures. Among the artistic Greeks these religious pictures or icons took the place which relics had in the West. Often the power to perform miracles was attributed to the icons.

Emperor Leo III (716-741) began to wage a war on these images in the tenth year of his reign, when he prohibited the people from worshiping icons. Initially he insisted that he was only protecting the images from touching and kissing. Then in 730 he published an edict which demanded the removal and the destruction of all the images.

Not only did Leo's actions arouse the opposition of the clergy, the people saw this as an attack upon their religion. Leo was able to enforce his edicts within the limits of his empire, but he had no power among the Christians who were under Muslim control and he could not control those in the West. About 729 Gregory II, bishop of Rome, openly defied Leo's position and announced his support of images.

Constantine V (741-775) continued his father's iconoclastic policy, in spite of his people's opposition. In 754 he called an iconoclastic council for Constantinople. This was supposed to be the seventh ecumenical council, but it was later rejected as a council of heretics. The 330 bishops who attended the council supported the emperor, but there were no patriarchs in attendance. The patriarchs of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria and Rome chose not to attend and the see of Constantinople happened to be vacant at the time. Appealing to the Second Commandment and to bible passages which denounced idolatry, the council forbade the public and private worship of sacred images. In addition, it denounced all religious pictures and representations as pagan idolatry. With great enthusiasm the emperor destroyed images and white-washed pictures.

Leo IV (775-780) continued the campaign but with less enthusiasm. Moreover, his wife, Irene of Athens, was personally devoted to the worship of images. After his death and during the minority of their son, Constantine VI (780-802), Irene worked for the restoration of images. At first she proclaimed toleration. Then she called an ecumenical council which she hoped would set aside the decrees of the council of 754. Her initial effort in 786 failed. Her second attempt, carried out with better preparation, was successful.

Empress Irene called for the seventh ecumenical council in 787. It was to meet at Nicaea where the council would be removed from the center of iconoclasm, but would still be within reach of the royal court. With approximately 350 bishops in attendance,[34] the Second Council of Nicaea met in eight sessions from September 24 to October 23. The council negated the iconoclastic Synod of Constantinople and sanctioned the limited worship of images.

According to the council's decrees, it was now permissible to venerate the sign of the cross, and pictures of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, saints and angels. Homage could be paid by kissing, bowing, burning incense and by

[34] The attendance figures for this council vary greatly. The Acts of the council were signed by 308 bishops and representatives. One contemporary commentator insists that only 150 bishops were there. Other accounts suggest numbers from 330 to 367.

saying prayers. The images could be drawn in color or made of mosaics or formed out some other suitable material. They could be placed in churches, in homes, out in the streets, on walls and tables, as well as on sacred vessels and vestments. Finally, the decrees also permitted the veneration of gospel books and the relics of martyrs.

This proclamation was supported by a few bible passages about cherubim[35] and many quotations from the church fathers—some genuine, others forged specifically for this purpose. Testimonials were given from people who had witnessed miracles due to icons. Furthermore, bishops, who had been at the Council of 754, renounced their former iconoclastic positions and begged for forgiveness. At the request of one of the Roman delegates, an image was brought into the assembly and reverently kissed by all. When the decree concerning images was finally passed, the bishops shouted,

> Thus we believe. This is the doctrine of the apostles. Anathema upon all who do not adhere to it, who do no salute the images, who call them idols, and who charge the Christians with idolatry.[36]

What Does All This Mean For Us?

In no era of the church's history, with the exception of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, have there been more important religious debates, or greater interest in them, than during the period from Nicaea to Chalcedon. The fundamental nature of the doctrines under discussion makes this an era essential to those interested in biblical orthodoxy. When Philip Schaff surveyed the period of the ecumenical councils, he concluded:

> The ecumenical councils were the open battle-fields, upon which the victory of orthodoxy was decided. The doctrinal decrees of these councils contain the results of the most profound discussions respecting the Trinity and the person of Christ; and the Church to this day has not gone essentially beyond these decisions.[37]

While appreciating what Schaff is saying and recognizing the blessings which we have received from their efforts, we dare not forget that the decrees of these councils were, in the best sense of the word, not "original." Francis Pieper says it well, when he writes,

> It is a mistaken idea that the doctrine of the Trinity and the deity of Christ were developed by the church councils of the fourth and fifth centuries. On the basis of the oral and written Word of the Apostles the Apostolic Church knew and accepted these doctrines. Luther therefore is right when he says that the doctrines formulated by the Councils of Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus and Chalcedon are presented "far more abundantly and powerfully" in the Holy Scriptures themselves.[38]

The Nicene Creed, in its 381 A.D. form, is the only one of all the ecclesiastical symbols which is accepted by the Greek, Latin and Protestant churches (with the exception of the *filioque*, that is). To this day it is spoken or sung Sunday after Sunday around the world. Although the Nicene Creed (actually the Nicaeno-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381, as affirmed at the Council of Ephesus in 451) is the only symbol from the ecumenical councils to which we specifically subscribe, these councils sifted, defined, refined and established our

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[35] The passages cited included Exodus 25:17-22; Exekiel 41:1, 15, 19; Hebrews 9:1-5.
[36] Schaff, *History*, IV, 461.
[37] Schaff, *History*, III, 603.
[38] Pieper, I, 381.

doctrinal foundations in the dogmatical areas of the Trinity and Christology, especially the incarnation and the divine-human person of Christ.

Not everyone in the twentieth century, of course, will view the ecumenical councils in the same way. There is a significant difference between the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches on the one hand and the Protestant churches which came out of the Reformation on the other. Orthodox and Roman Catholics consider the decrees of the ecumenical councils to be holy tradition, which cannot be changed, only expanded. Although some in those churches may debate the exact meaning of the teachings, the authority of the councils is not questioned.

For us the authority of the councils is not so simple. We are willing to accept the teachings of the councils only if and where they are in agreement with the Scriptures. This means that we appreciate and employ the councils' teachings about the Trinity and Christology because they complement what the Holy Scriptures have to say.

Anglicanism has a similar perspective on these councils and their work. The Anglican Church has always had a special respect for the teachings of the first four ecumenical councils and has quietly accepted the work of the fifth and sixth councils. But the Second Council of Nicaea has been of little importance to it. In the *Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum* (1553), which replaced medieval canon law in the Church of England, the church's attitude is expressed in these terms:

> Though we gladly give honor to the Councils, especially those that are General, we judge that they ought to be placed far below the dignity of canonical Scriptures: and we make a great distinction between the Councils themselves. For some of them, especially these four (the Council of Nicea, the first Council of Constantinople, and the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon) we embrace and receive with great reverence. And we bear the same judgment about many others held afterwards, in which we see and confess that the most holy fathers gave many weighty and holy decisions according to Divine Scriptures, about the blessed and supreme Trinity, about Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, and the redemption of man obtained through him. But we think that our faith ought not to be bound by them, except so far as they can be confirmed by Holy Scripture. For it is manifest that some Councils have sometimes erred, and defined contrary to one another, partly on actions of law and partly even of faith.[39]

The first Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople addressed and proclaimed the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. Even the controversies which followed 325 were useful in clarifying the doctrine of the Trinity—the relationship of Jesus Christ to the Father and of the Holy Spirit to the Father and to the Son. These controversies forced individuals and the church at large to consider the Bible's teachings carefully and in detail.

The Nicene and post-Nicene fathers did not pretend to exhaust the mystery of the Trinity. They did, however, pinpoint essential truths of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity to which we still hold today. These include: 1) There is only one divine essence. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are in one another, inseparable and they cannot be conceived without each other. 2) In this one divine essence there are three persons which in the Scriptures are called the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They are not merely different attributes, powers or activities of the Godhead; each person expresses the whole fullness of the divine being with all its attributes. 3) Each divine person has his property or characteristic individuality. 4) The divine persons are in one another and form a perpetual intercommunication.

The Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon focused on the doctrine of the Person of Christ. The Nicene Creed declared Jesus to be true God and true Man. These subsequent councils answered the question of whether Jesus was two persons joined in perfect harmony or one Person with two natures. Just as the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity reiterates the biblical position and stands midway between tritheism and Sabellianism, so the

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[39] Quoted in Toon, 192.

Chalcedonian formula goes back to the Bible and correctly divides between Nestorianism and Eutychianism. It accepts the two natures of Christ and, at the same time, proclaims the inseparable unity of the person of Christ.

The Council of Chalcedon continues to help us by pointing out: 1) the true incarnation of the second person in the Godhead; 2) the precise distinction between "nature" and "person"; 3) the result of the incarnation is the God-Man; 4) the duality of the natures; 5) the unity of the person. There is only one Christ, one Lord, one Redeemer; and 6) the whole work of Christ is referred to his person and not exclusively to one or the other of his natures. These lessons are and still need to be part of our doctrinal heritage.

Unlike the Orthodox and the Catholic churches, we do not accept everything that comes out the ecumenical councils. While the "canons" may provide us with interesting tidbits about contemporary life and problems, they are not essential for us. Furthermore, as the Anglicans pointed out, the councils were not all of equal value. Obviously, the Second Council of Nicaea ranks far below Nicaea I in importance. Of the seven councils on the "ecumenical" ladder, it occupies the bottom rung. Its importance is in defining the character of worship in the Eastern church. Although its decision is binding upon the Roman church,[40] Protestant churches have disregarded its decrees and condemned it as a source of superstition. The council did furnish visual aids for popular piety, and it stimulated the development of Christian art, but we can't say anything positive which goes beyond that.

There is much that we can learn from the past. In historical circles, a number of individuals have stated in one way or another the truth that if we don't learn from the mistakes of the past, we will be condemned to repeat those same mistakes again. Likewise, if we learn from the past, we can save ourselves much needless pain and agony. We dare not, however, ignore the past. We need to study the doctrinal debates of the past and make those outcomes, which are Scriptural, our own.

In the process we can also develop an appreciation for the individuals whom the Lord used to defeat error and to restore Scriptural clarity. We have reason to thank the Lord for his faithful servants of the past, as well as those of today, who proclaim God's truth and assist us in learning that truth. "May the Lord our God be with us as he was with our fathers; may he never leave us nor forsake us" (1 Kings 8:57).

Soli Deo Gloria!

[40] The church of rome did accept and support the seventh ecumenical council and eventually went even further than the Eastern church in allowing "graven" as well as painted images. At the time, however, the church in the empire of Charlemagne was not on good terms with the East. It took a position which was between image worship and iconoclasm. Charlemagne rejected the worship of images, but he did allow the use of images for ornamental and devotional purposes.

Appendix

The original and the enlarged formulas of the Nicene Creed are given in parallel columns. Later additions are italicized and passages which were later omitted are enclosed in brackets.

The Nicene Creed of 325[41]

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father **[the only-begotten; that is, of the essence of the Father, God of God],** Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made **[both in heaven and on earth];** who for us men, and for our salvation, came down and was incarnate and was made man; he suffered, and the third day he rose again, ascended into heaven; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

And in the Holy Ghost.

[But those who say: 'There was a time when he was not;' and 'He was not before he was made;' and 'he is of another substance' or 'essence,' or 'The Son of God is created,' or 'changeable,' or 'alterable'—they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.]

The Constantinopolitan Creed of 381[42]

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of ***heaven and earth, and of*** all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the ***only-begotten*** Son of God, begotten of the Father ***before all worlds***, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down ***from heaven***, and was incarnate ***by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary***, and was made man; he ***was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and*** suffered, ***and was buried***, and the third day he rose again ***according to the Scriptures***, and ascended into heaven, ***and sitteth on the right hand of the Father***; from thence he shall come ***again, with glory***, to judge the quick and the dead; ***whose kingdom shall have no end.***

And in the Holy Ghost, ***the Lord and giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spake by the prophets. In one holy catholic and apostolic Church; we acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins; we look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen***

[41] Translation from Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, volume 1, pages 28-29.
[42] Translation from Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, volume 1, pages 28-29.

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